



1999–2000 CATS ASSESSMENT

Open-Response Item Scoring Worksheet

Grade 7 – Reading

Type of Passage: Literary

The **academic expectation** addressed by the open-response item “Abraham Lincoln Denies a Loan” is

1.2 Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.

The **core content** assessed by this item includes:

- Explain the meaning of a passage taken from texts appropriate for middle-level students.
- Reflect on and evaluate what is read.

Abraham Lincoln Denies a Loan

It would have been easy for Abraham Lincoln simply to have given his stepbrother a loan. However, he chose another course of action.

- Describe the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother.
- Explain what Lincoln hoped would be accomplished by making this offer.

Support your answers with details from the letter.



SCORING GUIDE

Grade 7 Reading

Score	Description
4	Student describes the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother and thoroughly explains what Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making the offer. Response includes details from the article.
3	Student describes the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother and generally explains what Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making the offer. Response lacks some details.
2	Student summarizes the story and gives some explanation of what Lincoln hoped would be accomplished. Response includes some appropriate supportive details and/or quotes.
1	Student's response is minimal (e.g., the student makes general statements about the story or includes quotes from the passage without explanation).
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Offer:

For every dollar Johnston made, Lincoln would match it.

Lincoln's hopes:

Johnston would take responsibility.

Johnston would pay off his debts.

Johnston would form a good habit.

Johnston would provide a good example for his children.



READING PASSAGE

Grade 7 Reading

Abraham Lincoln's stepbrother, John D. Johnston, wrote Lincoln that he was "broke" and "hard-pressed" on the family farm in Coles County, Illinois, and needed a loan. Read Lincoln's response to his stepbrother's request. Then answer the questions that follow.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN DENIES A LOAN

[Dec. 24, 1848]

Dear Johnston:

Your request for eighty dollars, I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little, you have said to me, "We can get along very well now," but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether since I saw you, you have done a good whole day's work, in any one day. You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it.

This habit of uselessly wasting time, is the whole difficulty; it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break this habit. It is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it, easier than they can get out after they are in.

You are now in need of some ready money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it.

Let father and your boys take charge of your things at home—prepare for a crop, and make the crop, and you go to work for the best money wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get. And to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you that for every dollar you will, between this and the first of May, get for your own labor either in money or in your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar.

By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this, I do not mean you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines, in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home—in Coles County.

Now if you will do this, you will soon be out of debt, and what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out, next year you will be just as deep in as ever. You say you would almost give your place in Heaven for \$70 or \$80. Then you value your place in Heaven very cheaply, for I am sure you can with the offer I make you get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work. You say if I furnish you the money you will deed me the land, and if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession—

Nonsense! If you can't now live with the land, how will you then live without it? You have always been kind to me, and I do not now mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it worth more than eight times eighty dollars to you.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 7 Reading

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

a) The offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother was that if he would get a job and work a hard day's work then Abe would give him the amount he made. If Johnston made \$20 then Abe would give him \$20, now he would have made \$40.

b) What Lincoln hoped would be accomplished is that this would get Johnston "soon...out of debt." Also he would have a habit that would "keep you out of debt." Abe thinks if he just hands over the money then the next year he would "be just as deep in as ever." Abe also thinks this could help Johnston's children. In paragraph three he says, "they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it." I'm pretty sure this is what Lincoln hoped would be accomplished.

← Student describes the offer that Lincoln made to his stepbrother (i.e., for every dollar amount that his stepbrother made, Lincoln would match that amount).

← Student thoroughly explains what Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making the offer (i.e., his stepbrother would get out of debt, form a good habit, and help his children). Response includes details (quotes) from the letter that support the explanation.

Overall, the student demonstrates a strong understanding of a literary passage that was written during an earlier period of time (i.e., a letter written by Abraham Lincoln). The student clearly describes the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother, and thoroughly explains, using details from the letter, what Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making the offer.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 7 Reading

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

Lincoln hoped that the offer he made his stepbrother would help him accomplish the following.

The offer that Lincoln made his stepbrother was that when he gets the letter and until May that every dollar that he earns that Lincoln would give a dollar. For example, if John earned 10 dollars then Lincoln would have to give him 10 dollars.

Something that Lincoln wanted him to accomplish was to see if he would use his time wisely. From the letter it says, "You are not lazy and still you are an idler." I think that anybody that uses their time wisely will succeed in life.

Also Lincoln wanted his stepbrother to do "a good whole day's work." From the article it says, "You don't very much dislike work, and still don't merely because you think you don't get much for it."

Lincoln also wanted to see him getting into a habit of not getting in debt again. From the article it says, "You will soon be out of debt and what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from debt again."

These are some accomplishments that Lincoln wants his stepbrother to learn from the experiences.

← Student describes the offer that Lincoln made to his stepbrother (i.e., for every dollar amount that his stepbrother made, Lincoln would match that amount).

← Student explains one thing that Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making his offer (i.e., his stepbrother would use his time wisely) and includes a quote from the letter to support the explanation.

← Student explains a second thing that Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making his offer (i.e., his stepbrother would do a whole day's work) and includes a quote from the letter to support the explanation.

← Student explains a third thing that Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making his offer (i.e., his stepbrother would get into a habit of not being in debt) and includes a quote from the letter to support the explanation.

Overall, the student demonstrates a strong understanding of a literary passage that was written during an earlier period of time (i.e., a letter written by Abraham Lincoln). The student clearly describes the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother, and thoroughly explains, using details from the letter, what Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making the offer.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 7 Reading

Sample 3-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

A. The offer that Lincoln made to his stepbrother was that he would give his brother money equal to what he earns so if he earned 10 dollars working somewhere Lincoln would give him 10 dollars and John Johnston would receive 20 dollars a month.

B. By making this offer Abraham Lincoln hoped he could accomplish getting his brother out of debt and giving him a habit that would keep him out of debt because he owes Lincoln money.

← Student describes the offer that Lincoln made to his stepbrother (i.e., for every dollar amount that his stepbrother made, Lincoln would match that amount).

← Student generally explains what Lincoln hoped would be accomplished by making this offer (e.g., “getting his brother out of debt”). Explanation lacks details from the letter.

Overall, the student demonstrates a general understanding of a literary passage written in an earlier period of time (i.e., a letter written by Abraham Lincoln). The student describes the offer that Lincoln made to his stepbrother and generally explains what Lincoln hoped would be accomplished by making this offer. Response lacks details from the letter.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 7 Reading

Sample 2-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

The offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother was to go get a job. Lincoln told him to get a job at Coles County were you want be far from home.

Lincoln hoped that John would get a job and get out of debt. Also hoped that he would pay his bills and don't ask for a loan.

← Student attempts to describe the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother but the response is more of a summarization of what Lincoln wanted his stepbrother to do. Response includes appropriate details from the letter (e.g., Lincoln told his stepbrother to get a job in Coles County).

← Student generally explains what Lincoln hoped to accomplish by making his offer to his stepbrother (e.g., his stepbrother "would get a job and get out of debt").

Overall, the student demonstrates some understanding of a literary passage written in an earlier period of time (i.e., a letter written by Abraham Lincoln). Although the student incorrectly describes Lincoln's offer to his stepbrother, the student's explanation of Lincoln's goals is correct, and the response includes some appropriate details from the letter.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 7 Reading

Sample 1-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

- A. He wanted him to get a job in Coles County.
- B. That he would give him the land or something.

← Student attempts to describe the offer Lincoln made to his stepbrother but the response is incorrect. Response includes an appropriate detail from the letter (i.e., Lincoln wanted his stepbrother to get a job in Coles County)

← Student attempts to explain what Lincoln hoped to accomplish from his offer, but the response is incorrect.

Overall, the student demonstrates a minimal understanding of a literary passage written during an earlier period of time (i.e., a letter written by Abraham Lincoln). The student's description of Lincoln's offer and explanation of Lincoln's goal are incorrect, but the student's response does include an appropriate detail from the story.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Grade 7 Reading

We have chosen not to develop this piece because the isolated letter fulfills the criteria for persuasive reading/writing but not literary reading/writing.

- The letter clearly explains Lincoln's position and argument to his brother, utilizing a variety of persuasive techniques.
- Although there does appear to be a resolution to a conflict, there is no additional plot development.
- Due to the lack of character development, exposition, rising action, climax, setting, and basic literary technique, this piece proves to be misleading to Kentucky teachers and more importantly to Kentucky students.
- If a student were to use this piece as a literary model and write a comparable piece for submission in the Kentucky Writing Portfolio, the piece would fail to meet the standards for literary writing.
- Epistolary writing can fulfill the requirements of a literary subdomain; however, it must include plot development, character development, and setting. Typically, true epistolary literature includes a number of correspondences between two or more characters. Through these correspondences, characters are developed and plot structure is complete.

We understand the decision not to develop this piece will also take the four multiple choice items out of the release pool. However, based on the recall nature of each item, this deletion will not cause a great impact. The questions are coded for analysis and evaluation; however, the items require little more than scanning the document to find answers.